



Click Bait: You Won't Believe What Happens Next!

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ABSTRACT:

The goal of this chapter is to investigate Click Bait, one of the strategies most commonly used by online news journalists aiming to make their headlines more attractive to readers. The chapter begins by studying Social Networks and the power they give marketers in spreading information. Next, a historical context to Click Bait is presented through its origins as Yellow Journalism, a 19th century journalism trend focused on hyperbolizing news headlines in order to increase sales. Finally, Click Bait is studied as the online application of techniques like Yellow Journalism. This section analyzes semantics and some of the most popular headline construction formulas. Literature on this matter concluded that the use of certain headline construction formulas yields significant increase in click-through rates. These increases could be beneficial to the publishing organization as they increase advertising impressions, but could also be detrimental, as these hyperbolic headlines may make readers feel manipulated.

Keywords: Click Bait; Digital Marketing; Facebook; Media Tabloidization; Online News Headlines; Social Networks; Yellow Journalism.

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Global Village: “The world viewed as a community in which distance and isolation have been dramatically reduced by electronic media (as television and the Internet)” (Merriam-Webster 2015).

The Internet is considered to be one of the technologies which has had a truly major impact on mankind. Its rise in popularity has rendered distance between individuals or organizations much less significant as a factor on a social, political and economic level, resulting in the Global Village phenomenon we live in today.

This new reality has led to significant changes in numerous fields, especially those which deal with information. Journalists, who, in the earlier days of journalism, sought only to sell the most printed copies, are now publishing their news online, on their own websites, and sharing their articles on every social network they deem appropriate, making them directly available to their readers.

The present chapter focuses on Click Bait, a phenomenon that came as consequence to this need to spread news on social networks. Click Baiting is one of the many strategies used by online news journalists with the intent of making their headlines more attractive and, therefore, obtaining more clicks (Blom & Hansen 2015). What motivated research on this topic was the overwhelming success that Click Baiting has had on getting readers to click; perhaps more often than we would like to admit have we clicked through to find out “What Happens Next”.

In Portugal, Facebook is the social network with the greatest significance (Cardoso et al. 2014), and also the one with which the authors of this chapter are most familiar. As such, this article will specifically approach Facebook and its effects on journalism. Thus, the research is structured into three different parts: first, social networks and their impact and importance for society will be considered; next, the concept of Yellow Press will be studied, as it is a journalistic trend that dates from the late 19th century and aims to optimize and exaggerate headlines in order to get the most sales; lastly, Click Bait itself will be analyzed as the transition of the Yellow Press from paper to the Internet, optimizing and hyperbolizing headlines in order to get more clicks. On this last topic, the concept itself will be explained, followed some of the most popular formulas and techniques and a review on the impacts that it has had on readers and on the journalism industry itself.

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of Click Bait, the authors have identified, assessed and interpreted existing papers on the matter, composing the process of literature review as described by Cardoso, Alarcão and Celorico (2010) and Bucelli, Neto and Vendrametto (2014). Academic papers about Click Bait have proven to be scarce, in great part due to the recency of this phenomenon. As such, online news articles, blogs and other such references, some of which are also

cited by the few existing academic papers, were consulted, so as to properly complement and substantiate the results of the present research.

Although this chapter focuses on the use of Click Bait in social media journalism, the authors believe that the phenomenon, and the techniques, methods and means that it involves, will be applicable in other fields of study such as marketing, psychology and sociology. When researching a topic with this great an impact on the overwhelmingly massive community that is ever present online, there is no denying the value and contribution that such a study can have and what can be learned from it. In the end, this chapter aims to lead mankind's knowledge on this matter one step further, providing a better understanding of Click Bait, a topic which has become so relevant in our Global Village.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- ***Characterization***

Boyd and Ellison (2008) explain social media networks as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

Over the past decade, social networks have significantly grown in popularity, in part due to the spread of Facebook. Below, this particular social network is discussed and its impacts on a global scale and, specifically, on the online news industry, are subject to investigation.

- ***Facebook***

“Facebook is changing our notion of community, both at the neighborhood level and the planetary one.” (Kirkpatrick 2010 p. 331). First of all, it is important to understand what Facebook is. Briefly, Facebook is a social network, and, as such, allows for online interaction between users. It has even been described as a “dashboard for your social life” (Awl 2011 p. 1). From a deeper perspective, though, this social network is a platform that allows access to a set of tools for sharing news, information and ideas, and is very powerful and versatile at this (Awl 2011).

Facebook, launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard University, has quickly become the “village square” of the Internet, where people come together to share and talk about everything, from the day's news, music, literature, movies, or politics. Moreover, this social network provides tools that allow for extremely effective promotion, with free dissemination, of either creative projects or business (Awl 2011).

Its name came from the directories known as "face books" created so that students could find and recognize their classmates through the association between their faces and names. The original idea was to build a creative and online version of the traditional "face book", which would allow students to create, customize and update their own personal profiles using their real names, and their identity would be verified through the e-mail addresses connected to their university. Initially, this network was only open to the community at Harvard University, but soon became accessible to other universities and schools. In 2006, Facebook was finally open to anyone over 13 years old with an active e-mail account. Over time, the demographics of its users have changed and now the majority of its users is between 30 and 40 years old. Nowadays, Facebook is the social network with the most traffic in the world (Awl 2011; Schepp & Schepp 2012).

Facebook is one of the most powerful and effective tools for disseminating information. Anyone can be a publisher, creator of content, producer or distributor. It has brought different communities closer together, strongly contributing to a common cultural experience on a global scale, which is mostly moved by younger users. Facebook is a technological tool with an unprecedented influence in the modern public and private life. Its growth as a company is one of the fastest ever in the world, and it has been responsible for extraordinary changes in communication and interaction between people, the marketing of products, the operation of governments, the operation of businesses, and even in democratic processes (Kirkpatrick 2010).

Facebook is the second most visited website in the world (Google.com taking the first place), and is available in about seventy-five languages (Kirkpatrick 2010). "Instantaneous" is one of the words which best describes this social network. Facebook allows its users to communicate in real-time anywhere in the world. News travels faster than ever before, which has caused a great upheaval in the media, forcing an effective adaptation. The expression "to be up to the minute" makes more sense now than ever, and, besides being aware of what goes on in the world, users are also able to comment and view comments from others, share ideas, knowledge, concepts, theories, etc. Why buy a newspaper if one can have the news from any newspaper in the world (available in the network, of course) on Facebook? This is just one example of the influence of this social network and how it has been revolutionizing the current world.

This spreading trend of obtaining an online presence has led to an extensive use of Facebook as a platform for newspapers to share their content on the Internet. Moreover, after a few years, most online news websites understood the power of user interaction and content sharing, thus frequently resorting to the publication of shocking or sensationalist articles, reminiscent of the phenomenon of Yellow Journalism, which we will explain in the following section.

THE YELLOW PRESS

- ***Yellow Journalism***

Yellow journalism, also known as yellow press, is a type of journalism that is based primarily on sensationalism and an unseemly exaggeration of facts in order to attract an increasing number of readers (Collins English Dictionary 2015). Normally, the disseminated information is unreliable and of poor quality, its content being a result of shallow research, made up stories and interviews, and fictional sources, as well as accounts on only one side of the story. Also nicknamed "journalism that acts", this style of journalism makes use of attractive headlines, sensitive issues (such as scandal, crime, sports, death, adultery, among others), restructured layouts, and illustrations, aiming to trigger specific reactions in the audience and stimulate purchase (Campbell 2003).

Following the same train of thought, Frank Luther Mott, a renowned American historian and journalist, points out the dramatic (and sometimes false) sympathy for the oppressed as one of the complementary features of the yellow press, which was decisive in the process of seducing the lower class, suggesting an aversion to the existing power system and, of course, an implied willingness to look after the interests of the unfortunate.

- ***Historical Context***

The origin of the term dates back to the nineteenth century, having emerged in the United States of America following a fierce battle between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, editors of two newspapers in the New York City: the New York Journal and the New York World, respectively. Both newspapers were accused of resorting to sensationalism in order to increase daily sales and attract a larger and more diverse readership by making appealing to the consumers' emotions (Campbell 2003).

In addition to changing the journalistic content, its strategy also consisted of increasing the use of pictures, drawings, caricatures and comics, with easy reading and interpretation that would contribute to the spread of newspapers among the working classes with fewer economic resources and a lower level of education (Campbell 2003).

A successful example was The Yellow Kid, a character developed by Richard F. Outcault and who ended up as the main star of the comic series Hogan's Alley, initially published by the New York World and, shortly after, also by his rival. Both of them resorted to the Yellow Kid character to express opinions on social affairs and daily happenings, attacking one other through the manipulation and exaggeration of events (Meyer 2013a, Writing 2004).

It is thought that the expression "Yellow Kid Journalism" - which referred to the sensationalist reputation of the newspaper that, in 1895, spread these comic strips – was responsible for naming and developing the concept of "yellow journalism", and that Erwin Wardman, editor of the New York Press, was the first person to publish it, although an exact definition of the term was never officially given (Campbell 2003).

The heyday of the infamous tabloid journalism was shaken with the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, given that its origin was believed to be the consequence of the greed of the two editors who, seeking to boost their sales, adulterated, exaggerated and purposely omitted vital information regarding the explosion of the American warship known as The Maine, causing serious tension between the two countries. Because of the false publications of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst - suggesting that there was a premeditated conspiracy to sink the vessel - a public opinion raised against the Spanish colonial rule which, consequently, resulted in a declaration of war signed by the American president at the time, William McKinley (Lovett et al. 1998). Aware of the accidental nature of the disaster, the traditional press, adept of quality news, did not have any doubts regarding the origin of the Spanish-American conflict, especially after Hearst's answer "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war" to his artist who, being in Cuba shortly before the outbreak, had initially telegraphed the following message "there will be no war" to his boss (Campbell 2003 p. 49).

Interestingly, it was Pulitzer himself who, eventually, chose to distance himself from yellow journalism and went on to dedicate his time to quality news, thus putting an end to the long dispute with Hearst (Kaplan 2008).

Despite Pulitzer's detachment and the harsh criticisms from the public, the yellow press has not been fully eradicated, nor has it faded in time, lasting until the present day, with technological progress interfering, more and more, with how people communicate and disseminate information all around the world.

- ***The Yellow Press Today***

Yellow Journalism continues to be common practice today, and even greatly benefits from the fast growth of technology, not only adapting its techniques to spread to new networks and platforms, but also keeping track of the evolution of consumer behavior. All of this is possible because the Internet has come to allow swift publication, dissemination and sharing of content without the need to have its authenticity confirmed.

This metamorphosis forced reporters to rethink the routine of their professional activity, inciting them to shift their focus to their online presence and instant communication, in order to reach

out to more and more readers. Thanks to the tools provided by social networks such as Facebook, news from all kinds of newspapers became accessible only a click away, meaning the readers become easier targets for sensationalistic headlines.

Considering the fierce online competition that eventually came to be, it is not surprising that many magazines and newspapers, such as Marie Claire and OK!, bet on developing stories strictly to shock readers and use headlines to persuade them to access the full text of certain news which, most of the times, actually fail to report anything new. Unfortunately, we still come across many examples of news that, due to misinterpretation and lack of confirmation of the facts, spread erroneous information on the Internet.

As an example, "Crazy woman chases Brad Pitt" is the headline of one of the most popular stories ever read, and, although it is generally accepted to be a misleading headline (the woman was only chasing the actor hoping take a picture with him), it still rocked the online community. Another example is the headline of the video "Baby Snatched by an Eagle", achieving an admirable number of views, but, once again, turning out to be a disappointing forgery, confirming that not even videos are safe from misleading headlines (Your Dictionary 2015).

Naturally, the methodology behind the construction of headlines has evolved, adopting a more impersonal style and focusing on specific key-words that would leave the reader in doubt, causing an open loop and a curiosity gap, which, optimally, leads him to actually click through to read more.

Based on the Marie Claire Magazine's Facebook page (Marie Claire 2015), the readers can verify the new trends in headline construction: "Jamie Dornan denies a huge rumor about Fifty Shades of Grey" (one is left without knowing what the rumor is); "What robbers did to Lupita Nyong'o's stolen dress is so bizarre" (what the thieves did remains a mystery, requiring the reader to click in order to understand the full story); "You HAVE to hear the emotional interview that made Kanye West cry" (again, a strong enticement luring the readers to watch the video for any details regarding the story), among others.

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the optimization of news headlines does not necessarily reflect an improving quality of information. In fact, the main purpose seems to be to increase the number of website visitors, which, in turn, represents greater income for the website, regardless of whether or not the visitors are satisfied with the content. This is how the yellow press operates, and it is in this setting that the concept of Click Bait arises.

CLICK BAIT

• *Click Bait Concepts*

As with many terms that originate from popular use (with no influence of a single entity objectively defining a concept), the term “Click Bait” lacks a universal and thoroughly consensual definition. Regardless, there are some recurring topics that can be highlighted in the many existing definitions.

Below are some definitions for Click Bait, as determined by different sources and authors:

- “(On the Internet) content whose main purpose is to **attract attention** and **encourage visitors to click** on a link to a particular web page.” (Oxford Dictionaries 2015).
- “Content that is written specifically to **attract** as many **clicks** as possible.” (Shewan 2014).
- “low-quality, **formulaic content** with **little redeeming value** that is intended to drive up page views.” (Bilton 2014).
- “‘Click-baiting’ is when a publisher posts a link with a headline that **encourages people to click** to see more, **without telling them much** information about what they will see.” (El-Arini & Tang 2014).
- “**forward-referring headlines** are primarily used as click bait **luring the readers into clicking** on and reading the full article” (Blom & Hansen 2015).

Scanning through the definitions, three essential aspects of Click Bait are clearly underlined, those being the intentional omission of relevant information from the headline (forcing the reader to click through the title to understand what the article is about), clear exaggeration (creating high expectations which are not always met, consequence of the almost exclusive focus on obtaining clicks and page views), and the use of techniques and specific, recurring and formulaic expressions which are engineered to create curiosity gaps and open loops.

• *The Semantics of Click Bait*

Authors Blom and Hansen (2015) approach the methodology behind sentence construction in typical Click Bait headlines, focusing on the widely used techniques of forward reference: (i) the use of cataphora and (ii) discourse deixis. Below are some examples of how each kind of forward reference is expressed in Click Bait headlines.

Cataphora

“When Obama asks **him** about **his** dad, you can just tell that he knows exactly how **he** feels.”
(March 2015).

The use of the pronouns “him”, “his”, and “he” in the above sentence are referring to something that would only become known later ahead in the text (in this case, in the full article). Upon clicking through the hyperlink, one would understand that the pronouns were referring to Noah McQueen, a young delinquent who was being interviewed by United States President Barack Obama for having decided to change his life for the better.

Discourse Deixis

“**This** Amazing Kid Died. What He Left Behind is Wondtacular” (Mordecai 2015).

Discourse Deixis is used to refer to entities to which referential value can only be attributed by those who are in the same situational context as the one speaking or writing (Strauss & Feiz 2014). In this case, the words “This” and “What” make perfect sense to the author of the article, but create a curiosity inducing information gap to the reader, who is unaware of the true contents of the story (Blom & Hansen 2015).

With this, we have defined the two main expressions of forward-reference, which are very commonly used in online news headlines, but sparsely described. This said, it is now possible to quickly and objectively identify a significant portion of all Click Bait headlines.

Proceeding with the study on this matter, Kerswell (2013) defines three formulas which are widely used by some of the websites popularly known for producing and promoting Click Bait articles.

Culture-Jacking

“Three Things Gandhi Can Teach You About Marketing” (Qureshi 2014).

This formula is based on a quasi-mathematical structure, wherein X is a number, Y is an appealing cultural reference, and Z is something worth knowing (Kerswell 2013), as presented in figure 01.

Figure 01. Culture-Jacking Formula.



Source: Kerswell (2013).

It is relevant to point out that the usage of a number in articles under the form of a list is often a means to make its brevity more appealing. In other words, the headline above suggests that the

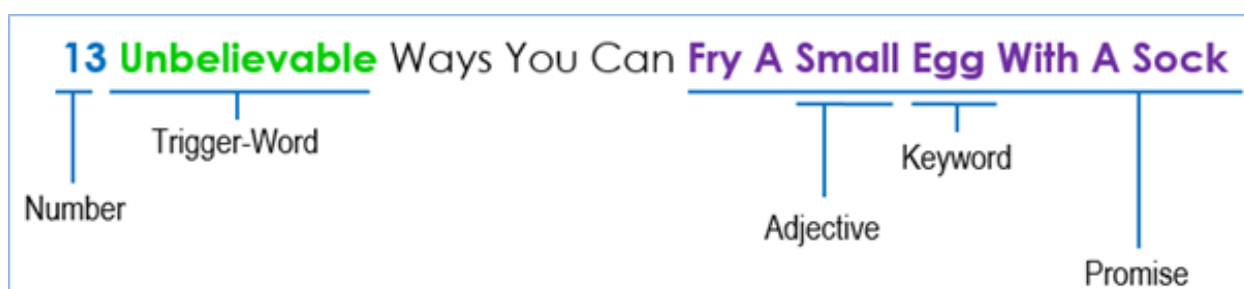
reader will learn something important about marketing in the time it takes them to read only three short paragraphs (Kerswell 2013).

The adoption of *Y* cultural reference is a means to attract a specific audience, and is often expressed by mentioning personalities or topics that are trending. This way, the article will gain increased visibility by being associated with specific pop-culture icons (Kerswell 2013).

Visualization

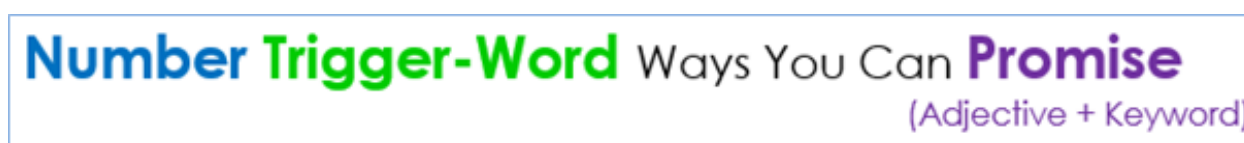
Similarly to Culture-Jacking, the Visualization method also uses lists to teach something that is worth knowing, but, this time, without using cultural references. In its place, trigger-words are used under the form of exaggerated and appealing words that will hyperbolize the importance of the article. Additionally, adjectives are used to help the reader form a mental image of what to expect from the article, although this image is not always true to reality, as shown in figure 02.

Figure 02. Visualization Formula.



Source: Adapted from Kerswel (2013).

Figure 03. Visualization Example.



Source: Adapted from Kerswel (2013).

Omission of key elements continues to play a very significant role in the headline construction, which, again, has had every piece of information that would be important to the reader intentionally removed from it: in this case, only questions arise on how to cook an egg with a sock, and no answers are given immediately. This way, the headline will have created the curiosity-inducing information gap that is typical of Click Bait. Formulating this structure, Visualization headlines should be as presented in figure 03.

Emotional Appeal

Unlike the previous structures, this one trades numbers for an emotional appeal. Kerswell (2013) highlights how many of the headlines from www.upworthy.com, one of the websites that most invests in headline optimization (Bercovici 2013), follow the formula presented in figure 04.

Figure 04. Emotional Appeal Formula.



Source: Adapted from Kerswel (2013).

The news, videos and stories shared on Upworthy are often controversial, inspiring or shocking. In their own website (www.upworthy.com/about), they describe themselves as sensationalists, and state that they use social media to bring attention to the issues they approach on their articles. As such, it is to be expected that they would use topics related to racism and sexism (which, due to their polemic nature, generate discussion, which leads to greater visibility), and frequently take a liberal stance on matters, very oriented towards the protection of human rights. These decisions are planned and go in accordance with their communication strategy and brand positioning (Meyer 2013b).

Below, there are three examples of articles from Upworthy, which, as described above and presented in figure 05, follow a sequence of emotions, starting with an outrage, but promising an improvement, hoping to inspire readers as they finish the headlines with an uplifting comment. Lastly, as is common practice in Click Bait headlines, the real contents of the article remain unclear, but the curiosity gap has been installed and the emotional appeal will stimulate the reader to click through. (Kerswell 2013).

Figure 05. Emotional Appeal Examples.



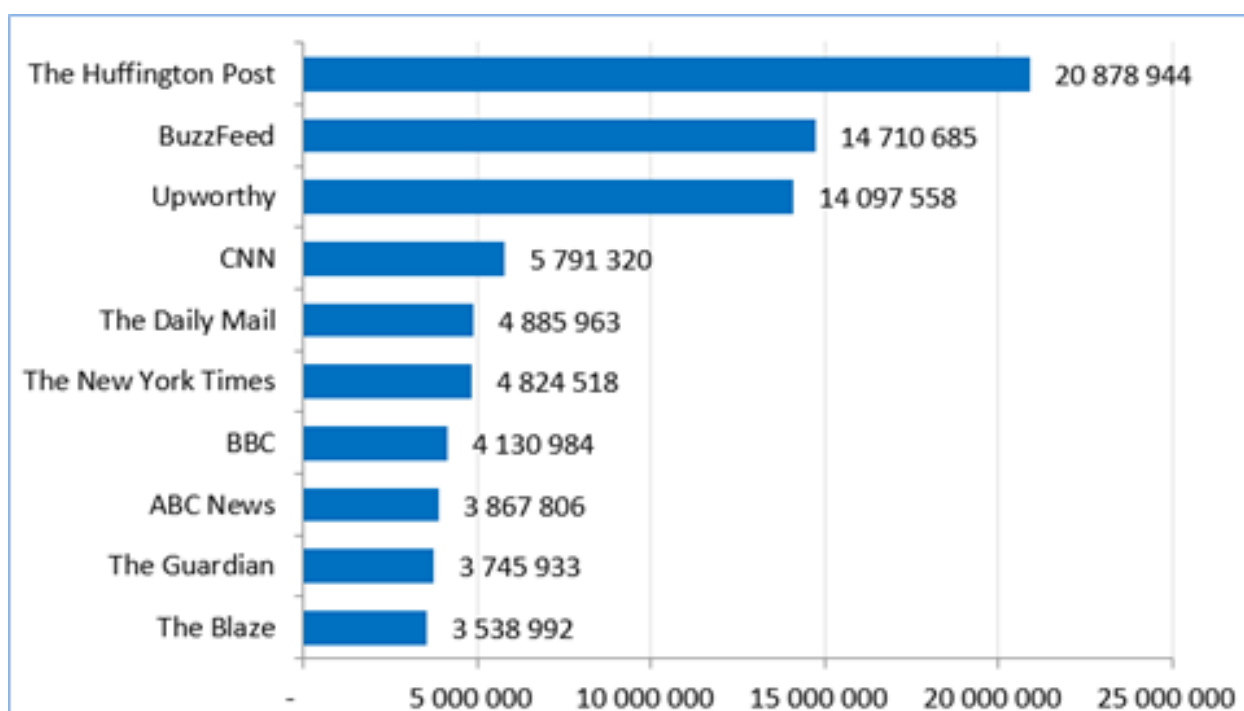
Source: Clark (2013), Narayan (2013), Toal (2013).

- ***Click Bait and the Industry***

When talking about Click Bait, two names immediately come up by association: Upworthy and BuzzFeed. In fact, these two websites are mentioned in nearly every article about Click Bait, from scientific to opinion articles. Additionally, other names such as The Huffington Post, The Blaze and Viral Nova are also mentioned, but, either due to having lesser visibility and impact on the online news journalism industry, or due to having a significantly smaller ratio of Click Bait articles compared to others, are not always mentioned by authors writing on this matter.

Liam Corcoran, an investigator from News Whip, has conducted a study which allowed us to verify that, from the online news websites that are active on Facebook, three clearly stand out in number of Likes and Shares from their posts: The Huffington Post, BuzzFeed and Upworthy. In the following chart, we can see the visual representation of this data Corcoran (2013) in the figure 06.

Figure 06. Online News Websites by Total of Likes and Shares on Facebook - November 2013.



Source: Corcoran (2013).

According to the data available in Alexa (2015), the visitors of these 3 websites majorly originate from Facebook:

Figure 07. Origin of Visitors per Website - February 2015.

Upworthy.com	
Site	Percent of Unique Visits
1. facebook.com	29.7%
2. google.com	8.9%
3. huffingtonpost.com	5.8%
4. aol.com	2.1%
5. youtube.com	1.8%

BuzzFeed.com	
Site	Percent of Unique Visits
1. facebook.com	21.3%
2. google.com	18.2%
3. pinterest.com	2.9%
4. t.co	2.6%
5. youtube.com	2.2%

HuffingtonPost.com	
Site	Percent of Unique Visits
1. google.com	22.9%
2. facebook.com	12.5%
3. yahoo.com	10.5%
4. t.co	1.8%
5. aol.com	1.4%

Source: Alexa (2015).

Upon further analyzing figure 07, it becomes clear how significant a role Facebook plays in generating page views to these websites.

It is also curious how 5.8% of the visitors arriving at Upworthy.com originate from HuffingtonPost.com. This leads us to believe that a significant amount of the news aggregated on HuffingtonPost.com are actually content from Upworthy.com; in other words, the former shares the content created by the latter, leading users to read the original article on Upworthy.

Another relevant matter on this topic is how Blom and Hansen (2015) point out that Click Bait headlines seem more common in soft news (stories mainly focused on reader entertainment) than in hard news (stories with a factual approach). The fact that The Huffington Post also features articles in matters such as business, politics and technology would imply a greater number of hard news, resulting in a more balanced ratio of Click Bait articles to non-Click-Bait articles. This could explain the increased number of visitors originating from search engines such as Google.com (22.9%) and Yahoo.com (10.5%), who would be looking for specific hard news, and represent a much greater total percentage of visitors than those originating from Facebook.com (12.5%), which would be those who saw a Click Bait article for a soft news promoted on Facebook.

By August 2014, Facebook reacted to the rise of Click Bait articles indicating that there were going to be changes to the algorithm that decides what content shows up on users' news feeds. These

changes aimed to debilitate the standing of Click Bait articles, as user feedback confirmed that 80% of the time, people preferred headlines that could help them determine if they wanted to read the whole article without having to click through (El-Arini & Tang 2014).

- ***Benefits and Drawbacks***

The main motivation for any website to resort to Click Bait is to increase the number of clicks and page views. Everything about Click Bait is directed precisely towards this goal, leading the reader to click the headline and visit the website where the article is published, only in order to satisfy a curiosity gap that was made by the headline itself.

This increased number of clicks and page views is a metrics of great value when negotiating with advertising companies, since a website with many page views would, theoretically, lead to many views on an advert if it were placed on that same website. The use of Click Bait as a tool to increase website value is a phenomenon that has been confirmed by Blom and Hansen (2015), who mention that “there is a strong tendency for using [Click Bait] in commercial tabloid media and commercial media without paywalls”.

However, there are negative impacts that come with using this sort of strategy. In fact, the very concept of Click Bait is already associated with a negative connotation, which, from a branding perspective, represents a significant risk to any company's image.

The pejorative connotation is the result of the customary dissatisfaction felt by readers. Satisfaction depends on the difference between the expectation and the reality of the object. In this case, according to the methodology behind generating Click Bait headlines, the results will always be headlines that create very high expectations, regardless of the actual contents of the article. Because of this, readers are very often met with an article that, in reality, does not live up to their expectations, thus resulting in dissatisfaction and, understandably, a sense of frustration.

Because of the recurring dissatisfaction, readers will feel misled and manipulated, and consider the news website to be untrustworthy. Eventually, the repeating cases of dissatisfaction in different websites will have led to an association of Click Bait with manipulation and untrustworthy journalism.

This suggests a short lifespan for this phenomenon. Its success for now has been undeniable, having met the goal of increasing page views and click-through rates, but the matter of brand perception deterioration should be taken into consideration.

Ben Smith, editor-in-chief for BuzzFeed, says Click Bait, defined as headlines that promise more than the article can deliver, has stopped working around 2009. Since then, BuzzFeed has altered

their strategy, focusing their efforts on optimizing headlines so that they are alluring, but making sure the articles deliver according to the expectations that were set beforehand. In fact, their goal ever since has been to make the article deliver so above the expectations that the reader will be compelled to share it in his social networks (Smith 2014). The “Share” factor ultimately results in better metrics for the website, which would be used to increase its value before advertisers. Because of this, as of now, advertisement companies are no longer only considering the website’s page views, and are beginning to value metrics such as time of stay, presence in social media, bounce rate, among others.

CONCLUSION

All business must generate income in order to justify and sustain its very existence. Online news aggregators such as those mentioned in this chapter are proof of this fundamental idea of business. The struggle for survival in the collective market that is the Internet is a natural tendency, and, with it, comes the use of techniques such as Click Bait, which are not always the most welcomed by the consumers, but are still a reality due to the sole fact that they yield significant results on the short term.

In this chapter, the conception of Click Bait has been studied, making it possible to conclude that, although it is a very popular phenomenon, to the extent that, in general terms, a reader can subjectively identify a Click Bait article and characterize it as such, there are certain nuances to consider in order to assure headline optimization. Additionally, the positive and negative impacts of these methods have been investigated, both on what concerns branding for the publisher in question, as well as on what concerns the journalism industry itself, given the influence that Click Bait has had on how viewers perceive online news.

For an integral understanding of this phenomenon, further study is suggested, in order to investigate the exact ratio of Click Bait to non-Click-Bait articles in each relevant online news website. Additionally, a deeper insight on the perception that users have of these very websites, as well as of Click Bait in general, could contribute to the development of headline optimization strategies that would not imply a negative connotation. On this matter, Blom and Hansen (2015) question, from a strategic perspective, whether Click Bait would not actually be closer to being considered manipulation, instead of a simple stimulus to consumption (in this case, clicking through to read the article). This question should not be set aside, since once a business grows to be ethically questionable, it becomes increasingly harder for it to guarantee its own sustainability.

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Clickbait: Você não vai acreditar o que acontece em seguida!

RESUMO:

O presente capítulo objetiva investigar o fenómeno do Click Bait: uma das estratégias mais utilizadas por alguns jornalistas da atualidade para tornar os títulos das notícias (headlines) mais atrativos aos olhos dos leitores, avaliando os seus impactos na comunidade online. Em primeiro lugar, o capítulo estuda as redes sociais, debruçando-se sobre o poder que estas facultam aos profissionais de marketing na publicação, difusão e partilha da informação. Em seguida, o fenómeno do Click Bait é contextualizado historicamente, sendo estudada a sua origem enquanto Yellow Journalism, tipo de jornalismo característico do século XIX apoiado no sensacionalismo e na exageração dos factos para aumentar as vendas. Por último, é feita uma análise ao próprio Click Bait enquanto fruto da aplicação virtual das técnicas sensacionalistas típicas do Yellow Journalism. Esta secção estuda as metodologias de construção semântica aplicadas às headlines. Com base na literatura existente, conclui-se que o recurso a determinadas fórmulas de construção de headlines resulta num aumento significativo na taxa de cliques. Estes resultados podem ser benéficos para a publicadora, visto que um maior número de visitas aumenta os ganhos provenientes dos anúncios online, mas também podem ser problemáticos, dado que o uso excessivo de headlines hiperbólicas pode levar a que os leitores se sintam manipulados.

Palavras-Chave: Click Bait; Marketing Digital; Facebook; Tabloidização das Mídias; Títulos de Notícias Online; Redes Sociais; Yellow Journalism.

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